

ASEAN- INDOCHINA:

**FROM
CONFRONTATION
TO
PEACEFUL
COOPERATION**

ASEAN INDOCHINA

FROM CONFRONTATION TO PEACEFUL COOPERATION



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АСЕАН ИНДОКИТАЙ ОТ
КОНФРОНТАЦИИ К МИРНОМУ
СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВУ

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Within the twenty-odd years of its existence the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has accumulated a wealth of experience in establishing and developing regional cooperation. It has become an important political and economic factor not only in South-East Asia, but in the entire Asia-Pacific Region. An Asian and Pacific country itself, the Soviet Union holds many of the same positions as these nations on many of the radical, pressing problems, and primarily, on the problem of ensuring universal peace and security. The Soviet Union has on many occasions supported ASEAN's initiatives aimed at establishing a zone of peace in the region and a nuclear-free zone in South-East Asia. The Soviet Union also welcomes the ASEAN countries' declarations to the effect that the Association has never had and will not ever have a military nature.

Regional Conflicts and New Political Thinking

The problem of resolving regional conflicts is among the most urgent ones in our interconnected and interdependent world. It is now impossible to imagine a

situation in a particular region rapidly deteriorating without negatively affecting the state of international relations as a whole.

Over the past decades the number of armed conflicts in various parts of the world was on the increase, and some of them assumed catastrophic dimensions. It is sufficient to recall the bloody Iran-Iraq conflict which lasted nearly eight years. However, in 1988-1989 the situation has obviously improved.

This positive tendency was initiated by the Geneva accords on Afghanistan signed in 1988. In the course of the talks, which were conducted under the aegis of the UN Secretary-General, a model for resolving regional conflicts has been elaborated, which has begun to be successfully applied to other areas of the world.

Among the basic features of this model the following ones seem to be worth noting: first, the recognition of objective political realities and the actual balance of forces, the rejection of former stereotypes which hinder an objective assessment of the possibilities for settling a crisis situation; second, the recognition, within the framework of new political thinking, of the primary importance of general human values, which should be put above state, class and national interests.

Another important conclusion can be drawn from the premise asserting the priority of general human values, that is, the settlement of the majority of regional conflicts is possible only through the reconciliation of the opposing sides, with due regard for the interests of the states and various public forces taking part in the conflict.

However, the signing of the Geneva accords and their implementation are not the same thing. Regrettably, it must be admitted that the situation in Afghanistan continues to remain highly complex.

Does this imply that the Afghan experience is of no significance? On the contrary, the very signing of the Geneva accords on Afghanistan has had a favourable

influence on the search for solutions to other regional conflicts. The policy of national reconciliation is making headway in Kampuchea. August 1988 witnessed an end to the hostilities in the Iran-Iraq front, which means that the bloodiest regional conflict has been halted. There are also positive signs as regards the situation in Cyprus, and in the Mediterranean. After many years of the alienation and hatred which reigned on this island state, the first indications of constructive dialogue between the Greek and the Turkish community can be seen.

When speaking about the positive changes which have recently taken place on the Asian continent, special mention should be made of the great role played in this process by the United Nations and its Secretary-General.

The part of the UN is considerable not only in settling the conflicts in Asia, but also those in Africa and Central America. Mikhail Gorbachev, the head of the Soviet state, quite correctly evaluated this organization when he noted that it "...is increasingly manifesting itself as a unique international centre serving the cause of peace and security... accumulating humankind's collective intellect and will."

Mikhail Gorbachev further made mention of the Soviet understanding of the specific features of the modern, rapidly changing world: "Now we have entered an epoch where all progress would be based on general human interest... We have arrived at a stage when... the whole world community would have to learn to form and guide the processes in such a way as to preserve civilization, to make it safe for all and more favourable for normal life. What I mean here is cooperation, or, to put it more accurately, 'co-creation' or 'co-development'."

There are great possibilities for this type of work in South-East Asia which is developing in a dynamic and contradictory manner.

Policy in the Interests of All Nations

Of great importance among those “knots” of instability which mankind has to “untangle” is the question of the interrelationships between the countries of Indochina, on the one hand, and the ASEAN, on the other. Under the term “Indochina” three socialist developing states are meant—the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV), the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (LPDR) and the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). ASEAN consists of a group of capitalist states of South-East Asia having different levels of development. The Association was formed in 1967 to promote economic development. Initially it comprised the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore. Later, in 1984, it was joined by Brunei.

The present relations between these two groups of countries having different socio-political systems are, for the most part, the result of the dramatic, historic events. During the aggressive war of the United States in Indochina, the governments of some countries of the ASEAN Six supported Washington. However, the SRV, which bore the brunt of the struggle against the aggressor, displayed realism and political will and expressed its readiness to develop relations with all the countries on a stable and long-term basis. This course has been supported by other countries of Indochina as well.

In recent years, Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea have made a tangible contribution to peace and stability in South-East Asia. In 1976, the government of Vietnam elaborated its programme for South-East Asia which was based on the idea of multilateral, constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation with the countries of the region in the political, economic, trade and cultural spheres. This programme which became known as the Four-Point Programme contains the following provisions:

- mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, equality, mutual advantage and peaceful coexistence;

- not allowing any foreign state to use one's territory as a base for an aggression or direct or indirect interference in the internal affairs of the parties to the programme or other states of the region;

- the establishment of friendly and goodneighbourly relations, of economic cooperation and cultural exchange based on equality and mutual benefit; the solution of all disputes between countries in a spirit of equality, understanding and mutual respect;

- the development of cooperation between the countries of the region so as to create flourishing states, with due account taken of the specific conditions of each country, in the interests of independence, peace and the genuine neutrality of South-East Asia, which is a contribution to the strengthening of world peace.

Vietnam has taken numerous practical steps to realize its declared principles. Various delegations from Vietnam have visited ASEAN countries in order to improve mutual understanding, to establish mutually advantageous cooperation in the fields of economy, culture, science and technology. In August 1976, due largely to the initiatives of Vietnamese diplomacy, official relations were established between the ASEAN countries and Vietnam. Various bilateral agreements have been signed. "The policy of peace, friendship and cooperation with the countries of South-East Asia elaborated in accordance with the country's development requirements and its course for independence," wrote the Vietnamese press, "has been adopted in the interests of all the nations of the region and not for the sake of time-serving, temporary interests of Vietnam. This friendship is friendship in deeds and not in words."

The Lao People's Democratic Republic adheres basically to the same principles. The 6th Congress of the ruling Lao People's Revolutionary Party held in

November 1976, approved the country's policy aimed at the normalization of the situation in the region, the achievement of understanding with the ASEAN countries and the creation in South-East Asia of a zone of peace, stability and cooperation.

The political formulas put forward by Vietnam and Laos in 1976 contained nothing unacceptable for the ASEAN countries' governments. They might very well have served to develop mutual contacts.

Vietnam's establishment of diplomatic relations with both Laos and the ASEAN states has become an important step in the search for mutually acceptable principles of security in South-East Asia. It seemed that the centripetal force would gain the upper hand over the centrifugal one. As far as Kampuchea is concerned, in 1978 the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation published a Declaration which contained a statement to the effect that Kampuchea deemed it necessary "to restore the relations of friendship, cooperation and good-neighbourliness with the countries of South-East Asia and to promote the building of a peaceable, independent, free, neutral, stable and flourishing South-East Asia. Kampuchea has not joined any military alliance and would not allow another country to build military bases on or bring to its territory military hardware." Kampuchea's striving for peace and stability in South-East Asia and its resolve to cooperate for the achievement of these goals with all the countries of the region were later reaffirmed in the resolution of the 4th Congress of the ruling Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party which was held in May 1981, and again by the 5th Congress which was convened in October 1985.

Normalization of the Situation in South-East Asia

The ruling circles of the ASEAN countries saw the overthrow of the bloody Pol Pot regime, which was

accomplished with the active assistance of Vietnam, as the emergence of a "Kampuchean problem" destabilizing the regional situation. Regrettably, ASEAN assumed the course of the "internationalization of the problem", i.e., it attempted to solve the "Kampuchean problem" with the help of third countries. However, such a policy has only broadened the scope of the conflict and rendered further attempts at its solution useless. It, therefore, still further departed from the proposed idea of declaring South-East Asia a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality, the idea which had been put forward by ASEAN itself. In turn, Vietnam together with Laos and Kampuchea, continued to adhere to its course of good-neighbourliness and to work persistently for turning South-East Asia into a zone of stability and cooperation. For instance, in January 1980, the participants in the First Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the SRV, LPDR and PRK, which was held in Pnom Penh, declared that the three countries of Indochina were prepared to enter into negotiations with their neighbours in the region in order to turn South-East Asia into a zone of peace, independence, freedom, neutrality, stability and flourishing.

Six months after this conference, at a similar meeting, this readiness was reaffirmed and supplemented by a proposal to sign bilateral and multilateral agreements between Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea on the one hand, and Thailand on the other. These agreements were to include provisions for non-aggression, non-interference in the internal affairs of one another, and the obligation by the participants to prohibit the use of their territory for aggression against third countries or a group of countries.

In view of the fact that the attitude of the ASEAN countries towards the initiatives mentioned above was mostly negative, the three socialist countries of Indochina suggested in January 1981 a regional conference between them and the ASEAN countries to discuss areas of mutual interest. As the Vietnamese press

put it at the time, "the problems of South-East Asia should be solved by South-East Asian nations". In the same month the socialist countries also proposed to convene an international conference with broad participation, so as to furnish guarantees for and legalize the agreements reached at the regional conference or in the course of consultations. In September 1981, the delegation of Laos, on behalf of the three countries of Indochina, proposed to the UN General Assembly the formation of a body for conducting dialogue and consultations between the countries of Indochina and ASEAN.

The Sixth Conference of Foreign Ministers convened in July 1982, in the city of Ho Chi Minh again reaffirmed the willingness of the countries of Indochina to meet with the ASEAN states in order to discuss regional problems. They stressed that the two groups of countries should themselves decide on the form of the international conference on South-East Asia based on the following principle: all regional problems are to be discussed by countries of the region themselves, while the relations with third countries—by the groups of countries concerned. The countries of Indochina suggested that an international conference on South-East Asia be convened with the participation of both groups of countries, neutral Burma, India and the five great powers which took part in the preceding conferences on Indochina—the USSR, the USA, China, France and Great Britain. They further proposed inviting the UN Secretary-General to attend the conference.

The general policy line of the three countries of Indochina in South-East Asia has been greatly affected by a tripartite summit conference held in Vietnam in February 1983. Having analyzed the regional situation, the participants in the conference called on all the countries of the region to resolve the disputes between the South-East Asian countries by means of negotiations, on the basis of goodneighbourliness, peaceful coexistence, cooperation and friendship; the participants

in the conference appealed to the states to cease all attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, to sow discord from outside and to use the territory of one country against another.

Yet again the three countries of Indochina stressed the importance of talks between the two groups of states of South-East Asia in the decisions of the 7th Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Pnom Penh in July 1983. They called on the ASEAN countries to start a dialogue without any preliminary conditions. People's Kampuchea, which did not want to hamper this dialogue, showed its goodwill by agreeing not to participate in it. Vietnam's agreement to discuss the ASEAN proposals for the settlement of the regional problems meant that there were no significant differences in the approaches of Vietnam and the ASEAN countries to the ultimate objective of the dialogue, that is the establishment of the zone of peace in South-East Asia.

At the 8th Conference of the three ministers of Indochina held in January 1984 in Vientiane it was noted that economic development was the most urgent issue facing both the countries of Indochina and ASEAN. Moreover, the socialist countries suggested to the ASEAN countries to adopt a general agreement on the principles of relations between the two groups of countries in order to preclude further aggravation of the situation.

The following year, in January 1985, the 10th Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs proposed to hold talks to reach a political settlement in regard to Kampuchea which would be acceptable for all parties. The Conference participants also proposed to include the following five points in the agenda:

1. The withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea provided the Pol Pot clique is simultaneously removed from the political arena;
2. The ensuring of the respect for the right of the Kampuchean people to sovereignty, provided the threat of genocide is removed;

3. The holding of universal and free elections in Kampuchea with the participation of international observers;

4. The turning of South-East Asia into a zone of peace and stability on the basis of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems and a ban on the use of their territory against other countries; the ensuring of respect for the independence of the countries of South-East Asia on the part of third countries and the provision of international guarantees for and control over the implementation of the agreements reached;

5. The support of the proposal put forward by the countries of Indochina to convene an international conference for the discussion of regional problems. This would include the participation of all the countries of South-East Asia and those states outside it which are prepared to contribute to strengthening peace and stability in this part of the world.

It should be noted that by the mid-1980s the world public grew much more interested in the proposals of the countries of Indochina. Some of the ASEAN countries displayed a tendency towards dialogue. In this regard, the 10th Conference welcomed the statement of Indonesia and Malaysia to the effect that the "Kampuchean problem" could not be an obstacle to turning South-East Asia into a region of peace, freedom and neutrality. The countries of Indochina also approved the proposal of ASEAN to declare South-East Asia a nuclear-free zone and announced their readiness to cooperate with other countries of the region in the realization of this initiative.

At the 11th Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Countries of Indochina held in Pnom Penh in August 1985, the participants expressed their confidence that "if all the interested sides make an attempt to solve the urgent problems in their relationships at the negotiation table, this will by all means create a favourable atmosphere for the achievement of a com-

plete settlement and consequently for the establishment of a stable and lasting peace in South-East Asia."

The "Kampuchean problem" was also named among the issues facing South-East Asia. Its solution has been facilitated by an important joint decision of Vietnam and Kampuchea to complete the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea in September 1989 without any conditions. Kampuchea also announced its readiness to start negotiations for national reconciliation with various Khmer opposition groups or individuals provided the Pol Pot clique, which is guilty of genocide against its own people, is removed from the political scene.

For Goodneighbourly Relations in the Region

The attitude of the socialist countries of Indochina to their relations with other countries is mainly based on the interests of strengthening peace and security in the peninsula. For many years after the formation of Kampuchea in 1979, Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea regularly put forward constructive proposals aimed at improving relations with Thailand. Kampuchea's proposal of July 18, 1980, for the formation of a demilitarized zone on both sides of the Kampuchean-Thailand border (which was rejected by Thailand) was later supplemented by a number of other peaceable initiatives from Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea which considered the normalization of the situation around the Kampuchean-Thailand border an important factor for the stabilization of the situation in South-East Asia as a whole. In July 1982, Kampuchea suggested the formation on both sides of the border of a security zone where only Kampuchea's and Thailand's troops would be stationed. At the same time, the countries of Indochina demanded that Thailand's practice of giving refuge to armed Pol Pot

followers and other Khmer emigre groupings be stopped. The People's Republic of Kampuchea declared its readiness to sign a treaty with Thailand to implement relations based on the principles of peaceful coexistence.

In the context of the struggle for the improvement of the situation in South-East Asia the three countries of Indochina proposed the improvement of relations with China. Thus, at the Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the three countries held in January 1985, it was noted that "the peoples of Indochina greatly value their time-tested friendship with the Chinese people and have always hoped to restore this friendship at an earliest possible date. The relations of friendship and cooperation between Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea on the one hand, and the People's Republic of China on the other, could have been an important factor for promoting peace and stability in South-East Asia." Special mention should be made of the position of Vietnam as formulated in the documents of the 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam held in 1986 which read: "Vietnam is prepared to begin negotiations with China at any time, at any level and in any place."

The dialogue between Vietnam and Indonesia being conducted on behalf of the two groups of countries—of Indochina and ASEAN—is of tremendous importance for the improvement of the political climate in South-East Asia. Of great significance in this context was the visit in August 1985 to Indonesia of Nguyen Co Thach, Vietnam's Minister of Foreign Affairs. It went beyond the framework of bilateral relations. An active search was undertaken for ways of improving relations between the two groups of countries with different social systems. This dialogue was highly appraised by the governments of Indochina as a new phase in the relations, characterized by the rapprochement of the positions and the strengthening of understanding and confidence.

Troubles and Hopes of Kampuchea

Many people in the ASEAN countries are beginning to realize that the process of the consolidation of people's power in Kampuchea is irreversible. So, using Kampuchea to drag out the settlement of the situation means placing obstacles in the way of an improvement in the political atmosphere in South-East Asia.

The year 1987 is a very important one from the point of view of the prospects for settling this problem. In the spring, a meeting between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and Singapore was held in Jakarta which was mostly devoted to the discussion of the Kampuchean problem. The meeting's participants expressed doubt as to whether ASEAN should support the demand to return Pol Pot to Kampuchea and make a distinction between the Pol Pot clique and the Khmer Rouge.

The settlement of the Kampuchean problem by peaceful means has made some headway for ASEAN has rejected a statement suggesting the restoration of the Pol Pot regime. After meeting his Indonesian colleague, Suppiah Dhanabalan, Singapore's Minister of Foreign Affairs, pointed out that ASEAN "is not engaged in manoeuvring with the purpose of getting Pol Pot back to power".

No doubt, the central event of 1987 in connection with this subject was the declaration, on August 27, by the Kampuchean government of the policy of national reconciliation. It appealed to all the Kampuchians, irrespective of their past, class or ethnic origin, ideological convictions and religious beliefs to unite. The government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea announced its readiness to enter into negotiations with all the Khmer groupings and their leaders, with the exception of Pol Pot and his closest associates. The policy of national reconciliation includes granting full civil rights to all refugees, helping them begin a new life, ensuring their right to elect and be elected, and providing them

with the opportunity to reunite with their families and to find employment.

The government of Kampuchea called on all the Kampucheans living both inside and outside the country to actively support the policy of national reconciliation for the sake of their own wellbeing and happiness and for the sake of strengthening peace and stability in South-East Asia as a whole.

The Kampuchean government went even further, when on October 8, it agreed that Prince Norodom Sihanouk should hold a responsible post in the state leadership corresponding to his contribution to the cause of national reconciliation. The Kampuchean leadership proposed conducting negotiations with international humanitarian organizations and interested countries to discuss the voluntary repatriation of the Kampuchean refugees living in the territory of Thailand.

The policy of national reconciliation of the People's Republic of Kampuchea has given Kampucheans a chance to stop the fratricidal war, overcome contradictions between various political forces and groupings, and solve the most important and urgent tasks facing the nation. This policy is in tune with the positive shifts which have recently taken place in the present situation surrounding Kampuchea.

To make this policy a success it is, first of all, necessary to reach an agreement between the countries of Indochina and ASEAN to the effect that Kampuchea should resolve its own internal problems without outside interference. The developments in the country fully correspond to this approach. Since 1984, Vietnam has been consistently reducing the number of its troops in Kampuchea. In 1988, some 50,000 officers and men were withdrawn, which is half the number of Vietnamese troops stationed in Kampuchea. The command of the Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea was also recalled to Vietnam. Representatives of all governments and organizations interested in the Kampuchean problem were invited to watch this action. The foreign

observers, ambassadors and military attachés and representatives of the foreign mass media were able to use military helicopters to reach any region of the country from which troops were being withdrawn and accompany the columns on the march through the Kompong Thom province to the Kampuchean-Vietnamese border.

Another important event occurred in the process of national reconciliation; this was the beginning of a dialogue between the head of the Kampuchean government Hun Sen and Prince Norodom Sihanouk. The results of the first meeting which took place in late 1987 in Fer-en-Tardenois, which is located not far from Paris, have on the whole been estimated as a success that could be used as the basis for a future compromise. The public in Asia remarked that this dialogue was conducted in the spirit of peacemaking initiatives of the ASEAN countries.

The second round of the talks has been considered to be an important step forward in the search for a peaceful settlement in Kampuchea and around it. There were fruitful discussions of the questions pertaining to the scheduled withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and the plans for creating a coalition government. An agreement was reached that in the future Kampuchea should have a multi-party system and general elections to the National Assembly would be held under international control. This body would be empowered to work out and adopt a new constitution. As for the foreign policy aspects, an agreement has been reached on the international status of Kampuchea as an independent, neutral and non-aligned state. It was further agreed to convene an international conference, of the Geneva type, to work out the method of guaranteeing this status and to form, on a later date, an international commission to monitor compliance with the agreement, which could be headed by India.

An unofficial meeting in Bogor, not far from Jakarta, in the summer of 1988 between Hun Sen and the leaders of three opposition Khmer groupings has

become a major positive event in the solution of the Kampuchean problem and in improving the situation in South-East Asia and in the Asian continent as a whole. Later, the participants in this cocktail party, as it came to be known, were joined by representatives of Vietnam, Laos and ASEAN.

Not long ago one could not have imagined such an event. However, the rejection of old stereotypes, a new situation in the world, new political thinking, the consideration of mutual interests, and the realism displayed in the approaches to complex problems have brought long-awaited results.

The informal talks in the Jakarta suburb led to the general opinion that the successful solution of the Kampuchean problem depends on three interconnected questions: the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops from the PRK, guarantees against the possibility of a return to the policy and practice of genocide, such as represented by the bloody regime of Pol Pot, as well as the cessation of external interference in Kampuchea's internal affairs.

As was noted by the world public, this was the first time that the participants in one of the most acute conflicts met not in the battlefield but at a negotiation table, thereby beginning a series of consultations aimed at untangling the "Kampuchean knot" on the basis of a balance of interests of the sides. This procedure which has come to be called the "Jakarta process" has rather good prospects. It is now important to preserve what has been achieved in Bogor, that is, not to lose the important elements of concord and compromise which have been found. It is only natural, that problems which have accumulated over such a long period of time, could not be overcome in one stroke. There are still many political obstacles, prejudices, ideological and psychological barriers which interfere with the establishment of the modern priorities of free and peaceful development. All sides, however, agree on the main issue: armed conflict and military confrontation should be replaced by political dialogue and multilateral negotiations.

Moscow watched the course of talks in Bogor with great interest and was greatly satisfied by their results. The USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that the Soviet Union viewed the informal meeting as a continuation of the dialogue which was aimed at finding solutions to promote the normalization of the situation in South-East Asia and to correspond with the hopes of the people of Kampuchea. This meeting has shown that all sides involved in the conflict fully realize that there is no alternative to the political settlement of the conflict.

The Soviet Union also stated that it is important in the future to avoid taking steps and measures which could undermine the process of coordinating the interests of the four Kampuchean sides and the interested states. No opportunity to promote the settlement of the Kampuchean problem should be overlooked.

“America’s Comeback in South-East Asia”

However, the cardinal problem of the region has not yet been solved. The main reason for this lies probably in the pressure on the countries of South-East Asia from the outside, primarily, from the United States. It seems that Washington is intent upon maintaining tension in South-East Asia so as to hinder detente. In this manner it can retain its military and political positions in the area and force on the ASEAN countries a corresponding way of thinking. In what way is this being done?

US global policy contains a whole set of means and methods. Among the non-military means is the granting of credits, capital investments, trade policy, all kinds of economic and technical “aid”. The amount of this “aid” depends on the behaviour of the “client”. Back in 1970, R. Walters, a prominent US expert on assistance to developing countries, wrote that whether the United States gave help to a country or not depended on the

latter's political aims and a desire to attain greater access to the decision-makers in the recipient countries.

The 1980s witnessed an intensification of the political and even military nature of trade, economic and other ties between the United States and the countries of the region. Military aid and the deliveries of all types of military hardware on a commercial basis have grown in scale. Within the last decade the United States rendered more than 3,000 million dollars worth of such aid to the ASEAN countries.

More modern military hardware is being sold to these countries. Their expenditures for this purpose, as well as paying thousands of US experts and the maintenance and training of their armies have gone up from 6,599 million dollars in 1980 to 9,087 million dollars in 1985. The process of the militarization of these states, with the help of the US, follows one and the same pattern. At first US military hardware is offered for a small, purely nominal sum, or even completely free, as a "military aid" (naturally enough, to rebuff the "communist threat"). After receiving the first batch, the recipient country becomes dependent on the United States for deliveries of component parts. It also requires the help of US specialists to maintain and repair the hardware. Although a percentage of these weapons continues to be delivered at no charge, at the same time commercial deliveries begin rapidly to grow. Having, in this way, won the weapons market in a particular country and having established close business contacts with local military circles and influential political leaders, the Pentagon begins to dictate its own conditions for the deliveries of weapons, working hard to get concessions and resorting to bribes, blackmail, and political as well as other forms of applying pressure on the country's government.

If the government of a sovereign developing country fails to display an interest in buying weapons and prefers to use the available funds for the development of the non-military economic sectors and for the satisfaction of

social needs, it is offered help in this area as well, provided it also agrees to buy American weapons or to build military installations with the help of the US.

In both cases the result is the same: by hook or by crook, the developing country finds itself tied to US sources for military hardware and technology, both "dual-purpose" and purely military technology. Gradually, it begins buying more and more US weapons on loans which are easily available from the same United States. The rapidly developing local munitions industry is also oriented towards US standards. A vivid example of this type of a country is Thailand which eagerly buys US weapons. The same pattern is used to militarize other ASEAN countries and to saturate the markets in these countries with American weapons.

Washington declared Asia to be the "second front" (after Europe) of confrontation with the Soviet Union, and it comprises an important component of its global military strategy. Here again we encounter an attempt to restore the old strategic doctrine of imperialism, which envisaged the creation of a military threat to the Soviet Union simultaneously from the East and the West. It finds its practical manifestation in the creation of a network of military bases in the Asia-Pacific Region and a further buildup of the American nuclear potential in this area. Moreover, the buildup of the US nuclear forces in the Pacific region was viewed as a priority task by Washington. The truth of the last statement can be easily proven.

The United States needed a pretext to implement this policy and to increase its military presence in the Asia-Pacific Region and in South-East Asia. It chose the above-mentioned "Kampuchean problem" as such a pretext. The regime of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary which cost Kampuchea millions of Khmer lives was overthrown in 1979, with the help of the Vietnamese armed forces. It would seem that the removal from power of a clique of political adventurers capable of medieval cruelty, which ruthlessly carried out a policy of genocide, should have

been met by all civilized mankind with a sigh of relief. However, Washington, eager to manipulate the Kampuchean events in the interests of strengthening American influence in South-East Asia, took the course of anti-communist hysteria and began to threaten the countries of ASEAN with the "Vietnamese threat". This is done in several areas simultaneously. The United States is forcing on the ASEAN countries huge amounts of weapons, calls on them to establish closer relations and tries to turn the economic union of the Six into a military bloc directed against the countries of Indochina.

Washington has many levers to put pressure to bear on the Six. An example of this are the events in Thailand in 1979. In the autumn of 1979 the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the SRV and the Prime Minister of Thailand signed an agreement envisaging a stop to the propaganda attacks on each other in the press. Almost immediately following this event a delegation of US Senators arrived in Bangkok to consolidate the forces applying pressure on Vietnam. However, the Prime Minister of Thailand Kriangsak Chomanan displayed political will and realism in his attitude towards Vietnam. Soon afterwards his government was forced to resign. *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, which is well versed in affairs of this region, wrote that the Prime Minister was removed because he became an obstacle to the new American approach to the problems of South-East Asia.

By means of economic and political pressure, military aid and secret operations, the United States continues its attempts to force upon the ASEAN countries a policy to its liking which would give the United States an opportunity to increase its military presence in the Asia-Pacific Region and to accumulate, in South-East Asia, arsenals of American weapons, including nuclear ones. At present, there are over 200 warships of basic classes, over 1,500 aircraft, and almost 400,000 officers and men deployed in the Pacific region. These troops are armed with first-strike nuclear weapons.

The US press is spreading rumours about the alleged

Soviet preparations for a war against the United States in the Pacific. However, such allegations are rendered completely wrong by the objective information from political analysts who state that the total holding capacity of the American Navy in the Pacific is more than 50 per cent greater than that of the Soviet Navy.

Basing itself on the growing activity of the US Subic Bay and Clark Field naval bases in the Philippines, measures taken to reactivate the military installations of the US in Thailand closed down after the US withdrawal from Vietnam, and the deliveries of new American weapons to the ASEAN countries' armies, the *US News and World Report* in its November 15, 1988 issue stated with satisfaction that the US was returning to South-East Asia.

Such a "comeback" is accompanied by a genuine psychological war against the countries of Indochina and an economic boycott of them. But Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea continue to display restraint and goodwill in their relations with the United States. For instance, Vietnam is assisting US organizations in the search for the remains of American servicemen killed there in the years of aggression and in the transportation of these remains across the ocean. It also continues discussing with the United States the ways for solving other humanitarian problems born of the war.

Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

With each passing year the countries of ASEAN are making an increasingly tangible contribution to the improvement of the situation in Asia. They make use of the favourable conditions for the realization of the idea, that they themselves proposed many years ago, of the creation in South-East Asia of a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality (ZOPFAN). The creation of this zone would make it possible to lower the level of military

activity in the region. This would, in turn, help to weaken tension in the region, do away with mistrust in South-East Asia, and help solve conflict situations in this part of the world. The leaders of the Six declared that the establishment in South-East Asia of a zone free from nuclear weapons is of paramount importance for the implementation of the ZOPFAN idea. The realization of ASEAN's proposal would be a tangible contribution to the creation of a reliable system of security in the Asia-Pacific Region, help strengthen the international regime of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and promote the elimination of nuclear weapons on Earth completely and for all time. Moreover, South-East Asia borders on the South Pacific where the Rarotonga Agreement on the formation of a nuclear-free zone in that region has already been signed. Thus, provided the ASEAN initiative is successfully realized, a vast nuclear-free belt stretching from Latin America to the Indian Ocean would be formed.

However, the creation of the ZOPFAN in South-East Asia and making this region a nuclear-free zone are unthinkable without certain guarantees from the super-powers. As far as the Soviet Union is concerned, the active stand of the Six on a number of international questions meets with its understanding and support. It should be noted that in his message to the chairperson of the 3rd ASEAN Summit, Mme Corazon Aquino, in December 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev wrote that there was a "significant positive potential" in the ZOPFAN idea. The Soviet leader also remarked that on many occasions Moscow has "expressed its positive attitude towards the idea of the ASEAN countries and other states in the region to create a nuclear-free zone in South-East Asia".

Regrettably, the US administration has assumed a diametrically opposite position. The United States rejects all plans to free the region from nuclear weapons for, in its view, they undermine the US strategic interests in the region.

American military bases in the Philippines are also a serious obstacle in the way of the implementation of the ZOPFAN idea, for on these bases, in all probability, nuclear weapons are stored. In general, the American presence in the region is a violation of the initial principles of ASEAN, although when forming the association the parties agreed on the temporary character of the presence of military bases in the region.

There is also no logic in the allegation that the existence of the American military bases in the Philippines is directly linked to the "Soviet military presence in Vietnam", and is a response to the "occupation of Kampuchea by the Vietnamese". The US bases were built long before the United States began putting forward these absurd allegations. The US used these bases not only during the entire period the Republic of the Philippines has existed, but also 50 years prior to the time it gained its independence, when the country was an American colony. In view of all this the Washington reaction or, rather, the absence of any reaction to the statements by Vietnam to the effect that its troops would be withdrawn from Kampuchea by the year 1990, is quite peculiar.

Still, even though the situation in South-East Asia is complex and contradictory, new thinking is steadily making headway in this region.

Moscow's Point of View

The Soviet Union, as a Pacific nation, carefully follows the development of events in Asia. In its view, the strengthening of friendship and goodneighbourly relations among the Asian countries, the pooling of their efforts in a common search for constructive solutions to the problems of security would undoubtedly have had a favourable effect not only on the situation in this key sector of the Asia-Pacific Region but would also have

greatly contributed to the preservation and strengthening of universal peace.

In his Vladivostok speech in the summer of 1986 Mikhail Gorbachev put forward a series of proposals which, if implemented, would have greatly facilitated a peaceful future for the Asia-Pacific Region. The Soviet leader proposed the establishment of a firm obstacle to the proliferation and buildup of nuclear weapons in the region, to begin talks on reducing the naval activities, to move from words to deeds in working out confidence-building measures, to assume a pledge not to use force and to actively search for ways of settling regional conflicts. Speaking on the problems of Indochina, Mikhail Gorbachev drew attention to the following aspects:

First, "the Khmer people sustained terrible losses. That country, its cities and villages were more than once victims of American bombing raids. Through its suffering that country has earned itself the right to choose its friends and allies. It is impermissible to try and draw it back into its tragic past..."

Second, Moscow is interested that the Vietnamese-Chinese border again becomes a "border of peace and goodneighbourly relations", that a friendly dialogue is resumed and there are no groundless suspicions or mistrust.

Third, in the Soviet opinion, "there are no insurmountable obstacles in the way of establishing mutually acceptable relations between the countries of Indochina and ASEAN. Given goodwill and the absence of foreign interference they could solve their problems which would simultaneously benefit the cause of security in Asia."

The position of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea increasingly makes sober-minded politicians in South-East Asia realize that a "frontal attack" and pressure on these three countries would not make the situation in the region more secure. And the new Soviet approach to the problems of the region has also had a positive effect

on the situation there. The Delhi Declaration signed by the Soviet Union and India in 1987 has become an example of a new political-philosophical approach to the key problems of inter-state relations. The Delhi Declaration is based upon the principles of a nuclear-free and non-violent world. The importance of this document signed by Mikhail Gorbachev and Rajiv Gandhi, goes beyond a merely bilateral or regional framework for it expresses the hopes and aspirations of all mankind. The Declaration is the embodiment of new political thinking in modern world. Later Mikhail Gorbachev said that it "is not merely another declaration or appeal but a philosophy of action... In its development it is keeping pace with objective processes under way in our world, and it is in fact already working."

These Soviet foreign-policy ideas and proposals are not groundless improvisations. The Soviet leadership has thoroughly studied lessons drawn from the past and the present realities and has given consideration to the ideas and initiatives of other countries, including, naturally, those of the socialist countries of Asia. In developing mutually acceptable proposals it seeks to find a resolution suitable to all sides.

Among the serious problems requiring the strict observance of such a balance is the lagging of international cooperation behind the rapid and uneven economic growth of individual countries. The widening of such a gap would inevitably put further development in jeopardy both within the given region and within the framework of the entire world economy. This situation gives rise to numerous problems, including the need to improve international relations. Among the most urgent problems are the settlement of conflict situations, untangling confrontational knots and curbing militarization.

In order to promote the cause of universal security in Asia, in September 1988 the Soviet Union proposed the following:

First. Aware of the Asian and Pacific countries' con-

cern, the Soviet Union will not increase the amount of any nuclear weapons in the region—it has already been practising this for some time—and is calling upon the United States and other nuclear powers not to deploy them additionally in the region.

Second. The Soviet Union is inviting the main naval powers of the region to hold consultations on not increasing naval forces in the region.

Third. The USSR suggests that the question of lowering military confrontation in the areas where the coasts of the USSR, the PRC, Japan, the DPRK, and South Korea converge be discussed on a multilateral basis with a view to freezing and commensurately lowering the levels of naval and air forces and limiting their activity.

Fourth. If the United States agrees to eliminate military bases in the Philippines, the Soviet Union will be ready, on agreement with the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, to give up the fleet's material and technical supply station in Camranh Bay.

Fifth. In the interests of the safety of sea lanes and air communications in the region, the USSR suggests that measures be jointly elaborated to prevent incidents in the open sea and air space over it. The experience of the already existing bilateral Soviet-American and Soviet-British accords as well as the USA-USSR-Japan trilateral accord could be used in the elaboration of these measures.

Sixth. The Soviet Union proposes that an international conference on making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace be held not later than 1990. Preparatory work for it is known to have been completed, in the main, at the United Nations Organization.

Seventh. The USSR suggests discussing at any level and with any interested country the question of creating a negotiating mechanism to consider Soviet and any other proposals pertaining to the security of the Asia-Pacific Region.

These seven points were enumerated by Mikhail Gorbachev in his speech on September 17, 1988, in the

Siberian town of Krasnoyarsk. The Soviet leader also added that there existed experience which demonstrated that contacts between the military were useful. He was referring to the cooperation between Soviet officers and generals and their American counterparts in connection with the implementation of the Treaty Between the USSR and the USA on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (the Treaty entered into force and began to be implemented with the liquidation of the first-strike nuclear missiles SS-20 and Pershing-2). He further stated "One feels more at ease when generals and admirals look at each other not through binoculars but face each other at the negotiation table. A wide range of military activities could become the subject of their discussion."

. . .

Asia, now populated by over 3,000 million people, has a huge potential. The task is to use this potential to promote general progress and peace throughout the world. This historic chance might be lost if all the problems facing this region are not dealt with immediately and thoroughly. Moreover, the gigantic potential of Asia, South-East Asia included, might also become a dangerous source of regional contradictions and conflicts which could set the whole world aflame. This is the reason why it is high time to pool efforts in order to establish a sensible and all-embracing cooperation throughout the region.

The three friendly socialist countries of Indochina fully realize this. Together with the Soviet Union, Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea are waging a persistent struggle for the improvement of the situation in South-East Asia. The constructive proposals of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea are on a par with the peaceful initiatives of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries of Asia. They have no intention of imposing on the other

countries a ready formula for Asian security. On the contrary, they call on other countries to join in an active search for such a formula both on a bilateral and multi-lateral basis.

Only the realization of the need for this search and the constructive involvement in it of all the states and governments of South-East Asia will make it possible to ensure genuine security for all the nations, to make the Indian Ocean and all the adjoining areas safe and secure for all.

ASEAN INDOCHINA

FROM CONFRONTATION TO PEACEFUL COOPERATION



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